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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Priority Theme: Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Statement submitted by Universal Peace Federation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Education is the pathway for children's future social inclusion: it enables them to access the opportunities necessary to overcome challenges and inequalities. What efforts can be undertaken to ensure that children receive an education and have academic success? There are clearly many. For example, schools must be accessible and poverty, poor health, and hunger must be eradicated. One natural social protection that contributes to the amelioration of these challenges and increases children's educational success is the family or, more precisely, parents. No government, NGO, or social agency can have an influence on children's inclusion into the world of learning and education that a caring mother or father does.

It is parents that make sure their children have the necessary school uniform or books and make sure they get to school and do so safely. It is parents that instil in their young child the love of reading and encourage their school-age children to invest in schoolwork and develop the self-discipline necessary to do so. Research shows that children of involved parents have higher scores on reading and math tests. Many documents such as from the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo +5, state that the role of parents and the family should be recognized and promoted as central in educating their children and instilling in them virtues and positive attitudes. Furthermore, parents have not only a role but also responsibilities, rights, and duties to raise, educate, and guide their children. These parental responsibilities and rights should be recognized, respected and supported.

Early childhood development and the role of parents are fundamental. Research indicates that a secure attachment or responsive bonding between parents and young children affects the wiring of the brain and increases the child's capacities to learn. The importance of parents caring for and nurturing their children from the earliest stage to adolescence was emphasized in Children Summit, 20-5. The optimal "window of opportunity" for child development takes place before age five and the "window" is never again as open as a child matures.

Human beings are relational. The quality of parent-child relationship shapes a child's relational abilities for the rest of his or her life. A wealth of research confirms that children raised in a stable family are at a lesser risk on all levels of well-being compared to children experiencing family instability. Family stability generates measurable benefits to children's physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cognitive development as stated in Children Summit, +10, 37-10. When parents' capacities are strengthened with support and services, healthy early childhood development will be fostered.

In conclusion. Universal Peace Federation would like to encourage the scrutiny of policies, programs, and approaches that affect the responsibilities and rights of parents. We should ask questions such as, "Does this effort include and facilitate parents as a unique part of the solution to social inclusion and the SDGs? What can be done to strengthen parents' capacities in their unique societal roles, responsibilities, and rights?" Family-oriented policies and best practices which support parents and help improve their skills, need to be evaluated and encouraged. Most parents do their best to love, protect, educate, and provide for their children. This unique resource of the fundamental and natural social group unit clearly is deserving of and entitled to recognition, protection and promotion by society and the State, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article16-3.